



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

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Governor

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Commissioner

Peter Mason
Deputy Commissioner

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

March 16, 2018

Senators Gerratana and Somers, Representatives Steinberg and Betts and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the spirit of **S.B. 296 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO SERVE PEOPLE SEEKING RESIDENTIAL SERVICES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES.**

Having had conversations with a number of people regarding this bill, we appreciate its intent which, as we understand it, is to utilize existing resources in a new way to meet the needs of and to reach more individuals with intellectual disability in Connecticut. While we certainly support this concept, we do have some concerns about the way the bill is currently written. These concerns would need to be addressed before we could fully support the bill.

Historically, 'pilots' have connoted a new program with a dedicated funding stream. While DDS appreciates using a pilot as a way to demonstrate effective systems-change, we are uncertain what specifically is being piloted through this bill. DDS currently has, and uses, flexibility to create a continuum of supports through which individuals may move, based on needs, desires and availability. DDS supports as many individuals with intellectual disability as possible each year, within available appropriations.

The bill appears to highlight two concerns often cited by our stakeholders. First, it seems to address the perception that DDS has not established 'alternative service models' that are lower in cost than our traditional residential models. Second, it appears to point to the notion that DDS has not always been able to reinvest money from department efficiencies into developing more opportunities for supports.

We certainly appreciate any effort to identify a cost neutral concept that has the potential to provide more services to more people. However, while we are more than willing to focus efforts on systems changes that allow for a more sustainable and predictable future, we would suggest that we can achieve these changes more efficiently through internal policy, rather than through legislative action. In fact, DDS is already engaged in some of this work, in partnership with our private provider community. In addition to working with providers, individuals and families the department continues to explore ways to expand the continuum of service options offered while continuing to move the service system forward. In particular, DDS is focused on growing our most integrated and cost effective residential models.

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To the degree that providers voluntarily work to provide alternative, appropriate services to the individuals who they support, and where those individuals agree to such changes, there likely would be efficiencies achieved, as outlined in this bill. Funding freed up through these efficiencies could potentially be used to address a variety of needs that have been highlighted through the years. Specific to the language offered in this bill, this could include meeting the needs of individuals on the waiting list, who are not currently an emergency, and have identified non-group home settings as their future need. Again, we believe that this type of systems-change could be achieved without legislative action.

Finally, DDS would propose changes to the reporting requirements delineated in this bill. Tracking funding in perpetuity in a very fluid system is not possible, particularly without dedicated funding streams. However, DDS would be happy to report to the legislature on the types of outcomes that we track for individuals for those involved in such a voluntary program.

It is important to note that this proposal is separate from the Governor's proposal for funding to address individuals in crisis, which we previously provided testimony in support.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of [**S.B. 296**](#) **AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO SERVE PEOPLE SEEKING RESIDENTIAL SERVICES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES.** If you have any questions, please contact Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs at (860) 418-6066.